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State of Affairs

By Clayton Fritchey

Power and the CIA

Washington—Rep. Dante B. Fascell (D-Fla.) says that the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee which he heads "will soon" hold hearings on the report released last week by the three-man panel appointed by President Johnson to investigate the CIA's secret subsidies of students.

Since Fascell has already publicly blessed the report, the supposition is that the subcommittee will be called on to confirm his advance verdict that the panel took "a most realistic position."

It is just possible, however, that the students who were involved in these hidden million dollar expenditures might have a more "realistic" as well as more knowledgeable grasp of the situation than the congressman. It is certainly worth noting, in any case, that 60 former officers and staff members of the National Students Association charge that the report is a "poor substitute" for a full disclosure of the CIA's subsidies to the NSA and similar groups.

The Johnson panel recommended terminating the covert student operations, and suggested some other means might be found to carry them on openly. "We believe," the student leaders said, "that the public has a right to know more than the report has told."

They are not likely to get their wish, for a "thorough" investigation would almost certainly go beyond the student matter, and get into areas of truly vital importance, such as:

1. Considering proposals to remove "black" operations from CIA management, and confine the agency to its original role of gathering and evaluating worldwide intelligence;
2. Determining whether the agency should be allowed to continue making policy, as well as carrying it out.

There has never been a director of the CIA who hasn't expressly denied that the agency "made" or decisively shaped policy. This does not square, however, with the authoritative view of Harry S. Truman, the man who created the agency shortly after World War II.



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"For some time I have been disturbed," the former President said in 1963, "by the way CIA has been diverted from its original assignment. It has become an operational and at times a policy-making arm of the Government." Truman flatly stated that he had never intended for the agency to go beyond straight intelligence work.

Truman's doubts are now impressively confirmed by Roger Hilsman, who served under both Kennedy and Johnson as director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and later as assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs. In the first post he was the department's chief liaison with the CIA.

There could hardly be a better informed witness to the dominant role that intelligence has played in the last few years; and, in an absorbing book to be published later this spring, Hilsman brilliantly illuminates some of the obscurities of recent foreign policy.

His book is not muckraking but fresh history. It is not an indictment of the CIA, but a conscientious effort to analyze the problem it poses. He recalls Allen Dulles, CIA's most famous director, as saying, "The National Security Act of 1947 has given intelligence a more influential position in our government than intelligence enjoys in any other government of the world." It was an understatement.

The Root of the Trouble

"The basic trouble," says Hilsman, "was that the agency was simply too powerful for the narrow function for which it was responsible. It combined in one organization just too many of the resources and instruments of foreign policy . . ."

Ideally, he thinks, the best solution—"was probably along the lines the British had followed—which kept the research and analysis functions in an organization separate from the secret intelligence-gathering functions, and subordinated the latter very sharply to the Foreign Office.

But, as Hilsman points out, "Such a drastic move would require legislation," and that, he fears, "would clearly be impossible in the face of CIA's natural strength with the coalition of Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans that dominate Congress."

There is little doubt that the hearing promised by Fascell will soon make Hilsman look like a prophet.

MORI/CDF